9596

THE BLESSING OF PEACE, AND THE MEANS OF PRESERVING IT.

A

SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

AT ST. MARY'S,

ON

THURSDAY, MAY 5. M.DCC.LXIII.

BEING THE DAY APPOINTED FOR A GENERAL THANKSGIVING TO ALMIGHTY GOD FOR THE PEACE.

BY JACOB JEFFERSON, M.A.
FELLOW OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE VICE-CHANCELLOR AND HEADS OF HOUSES.

OXFORD:
AT THE CLARENDON PRESS. M.DCC.LXIII.
Sold by DAN. PRINCE. And by JOHN RIVINGTON in St. *Paul's Church-Yard*, and JOHN ROBSON in *New Bond-Street, London.*

Imprimatur,

JO. BROWNE,

Vice-Can. OXON.

Maii 9. 1763.

PROV. XVI. 7.

When a man's ways pleaſe the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

IN the nature of things, and by the ſpecial favour of GOD, "[a] righteouſneſs exalteth a nation;" but "ſin is" a ſource of "reproach" and miſery "to any people." That ſuch are the different natural tendencies of national virtue and national depravation of manners, is moſt evident. And that GOD does moreover ſometimes particularly interpoſe to reward righteous, and puniſh wicked nations, though not in a manner ſo open to ſenſe and obſervation, is yet, I think, from reaſon and ſcripture certain and indubitable.

Reaſon ſuggeſts to us that the all-wiſe and all-powerful Creator of the world can and muſt govern and preſide over it. As he is every where preſent, ſees and knows all things,

[a] Prov. XIV. 34.

and is infinitely able to determine all events according to his own will; it were abſurd to ſuppoſe him only a careleſs and unconcerned ſpectator of them. And as we are not more ſure that there is a GOD, than that he delights in virtue; we cannot but conclude that in this his government of the world all due regard is had to the ſupport and encouragement of that which he delights in.

Theſe concluſions of reaſon are abundantly confirmed to us by ſcripture. For if we look into the old teſtament, the doctrine of GOD's governing the moral world meets us in almoſt every page; and is illuſtrated by a variety of hiſtorical examples. And in the new, that full and final revelation of the counſel of GOD, we are expreſsly told that his providence extends to the ſmalleſt things; that "[a] not a ſparrow falleth on the ground with-"out our father:" much more, muſt we conclude, are thoſe great events, on which the fates of ſtates and kingdoms, and the welfare, ſpiritual as well as temporal, of thouſands depend, under his eſpecial ſuperintendence and direction.

a Matt. X. 29.

From

From a perſwaſion of the truth of this great doctrine, we have now been returning thanks to God for delivering us from the dangers and miſeries of an expenſive and bloody war, and for crowning that unparalleled ſeries of victories and ſucceſſes, which he graciouſly vouchſafed us in the courſe of it, with an honourable, advantageous, and (we truſt) laſting peace. To a nation, juſt reſtored to the enjoyment of ſo great a bleſſing, the words of Solomon, which I have made choice of, may ſuggeſt a very important leſſon; namely, by what means this bleſſing may be rendered *really* laſting. If our "ways pleaſe the Lord," if we have peace with him, "he will make even our enemies," thoſe whom ambition, or a ſpirit of encroachment, might tempt to attack us, to continue "at peace with us." But in vain is peace concluded on terms ſo juſt and equitable, as to promiſe ſtability and duration: in vain has nature itſelf marked out the boundaries, to prevent the occaſions of future war: nay, in vain will even the wiſeſt plans of human policy be for healing the wounds which the war has made, and ſtrengthening the conſtitution; if (which heaven avert!) our manifold and crying

crying ſins ſhould provoke GOD to turn away his face from us. Of the truth of his own words Solomon was himſelf a very remarkable inſtance. Whilſt he obſerved the divine law, he "[a] reigned" in peace, honoured and reſpected, "over all kingdoms from the river "Euphrates to the border of Egypt." But when he fell into idolatry, "[b] the Lord ſtirred "him up adverſaries," Hadad from Edom, and Rezon from Damaſcus, and Jeroboam from among his own ſubjects.

It muſt indeed be owned that theſe words of Solomon, in their immediate and direct import, regard, not nations, but particular perſons. But the reaſon, on which the doctrine contained in them ſtands, holds, with even greater force, with reſpect to nations. For as particular perſons will have their exact and particular retributions in a future ſtate, they may, very conſiſtently with the divine attributes, be here, for wiſe reaſons, permitted to be harraſſed, or even oppreſſed and deſtroyed by their enemies: but national bleſſings muſt of neceſſity be temporal; if not on account of ſtrict juſtice, and becauſe ſocieties, as ſuch, can only be rewarded here; yet

a 1 Kin. IV. 21. b — XI. 14, 23.

for

for the publick manifeſtation of providence to the world, and of GOD's immediate regard to virtue in this preſent ſtate.

The text, thus accommodated to the buſineſs of this day, will furniſh juſt occaſion of diſcourſing, (and that with a view to the preſent circumſtances of this nation;)

Firſt, Of the greatneſs of the bleſſing of peace.

And ſecondly, Of the means by which the preſent peace may be rendered laſting. If our "ways pleaſe the Lord, he will make even "our enemies to be at peace with us."

Peace then (in that ſenſe of the word, to which the preſent occaſion reſtrains it,) is a ſtate of freedom and ſecurity from foreign, hoſtile attacks and alarms; a ſtate conſequently in which the community, not harraſſed either with ſuffering or repelling injuries from without, is at full liberty to attend to and cultivate thoſe arts and that internal polity, on which it's proſperity depends: and therefore to form a juſt eſtimate of the greatneſs of this bleſſing, the evils of war

from

from which it ſecures us, as well as the poſitive advantages ariſing from it, ſhould be conſidered.

Of the evils of war, ſhould an attempt be made to deſcribe them particularly, the repreſentation would probably fall far ſhort of the truth. It could not (and thanks be to God that it could not) be drawn from what we ourſelves, within our own country, have ſeen or experienced. And poſſibly the very brilliancy and number of our ſucceſſes in every quarter of the globe, whilſt they rendered us leſs ſenſible of the burden of the war, and leſs deſirous of ſeeing a concluſion of it, may alſo, by a common effect of extraordinary proſperity, have hardened our minds, in ſome degree, againſt the impreſſions, which the accounts of the diſtreſſes and miſeries of thoſe countries which were the ſeats of it, would otherwiſe have made.

But comparatively mild an aſpect as war may, for theſe reaſons, have worn within this our favoured iſland; yet it's true features are extremely ſhocking and horrid, and it's genuine, uncontroled effects moſt ſavage and cruel. At the near approach of a devouring

hoſtile

hoſtile army, according to the deſcription of the prophet, "the people are much pained; "all faces gather blackneſs:" the progreſs of it is marked with havock and devaſtation: "the land is as the garden of Eden before it; "and behind it a deſolate wilderneſs."

Protected however as theſe kingdoms have been by the gracious hand of heaven, and happy as we could not but think ourſelves upon a compariſon with ſome other countries; yet in the evils of the war *We* too have had a very great ſhare. On the firſt commencement of hoſtilities, the ill effects of it began to appear; continually encreaſed in it's progreſs, and were at laſt generally and very ſeverely felt. To paſs over the inconveniences and difficulties which almoſt every individual within theſe kingdoms, more or leſs, experienced, and the hazards and loſſes to which numbers were expoſed by the war, as matters comparatively of ſmall moment: other evils, of a more publick nature, there were, that might juſtly fill every lover of his country with very alarming apprehenſions; I mean the great diminution of laborious uſeful hands, and the prodigious addition annually made to an already enormous load of publick debt.

The

The ruin indeed, which even the continuance of our rapid and amazing ſucceſſes would, in all appearance, have inevitably brought upon us, our Sovereign's tender regard for the welfare of his people, ſuperior to all the temptations of glory, has, for the preſent at leaſt, prevented. But it is much to be feared, that of ſuch extraordinary exertions of the ſtrength of the nation, of ſuch immenſe drainings of it's blood and treaſure, the conſequence may be ſo great a languor and weakneſs, as cannot ſoon be thoroughly repaired.

But, whilſt we are taking a view of the evils of the war, we muſt not forget what fatigues and hardſhips (and I wiſh fatigues and hardſhips, though ſuch as were unheard of in former wars, had been all that) thoſe brave men ſuffered, to whoſe conduct and courage (under GOD) we ſtand indebted for our preſent deliverance from them. But great and important as our conqueſts and acquiſitions are, they can hardly afford any joy, when it is conſidered how dearly purchaſed they were with the blood of thouſands of our gallant countrymen; and how many parents, widows and orphans are left diſconſolate and deſtitute to bemoan their loſs. But affecting as this is,

it

it is perhaps not the worſt. For we are ready to think even theſe happy, who fell in a foreign climate, and ſaw their native country no more, in compariſon of thoſe maimed miſerable objects, ſad monuments of the worſe than brutal encounters of a day of battle, that now ſo frequently fall in our way, and at the ſight of whom our very bowels yearn within us.

To theſe, other reflexions, yet more ſorrowful, might be added, reſpecting the ſpiritual and eternal condition of many, ſuddenly cut off by the ſword.——But I forbear to enlarge on this part of my ſubject, as too melancholy for a day of rejoicing. It was neceſſary however juſt to caſt an eye back on the evils from which we are eſcaped, that we may now, with greater pleaſure and gratitude, take a view of the poſitive advantages of our preſent happy ſituation. And

Here, the quiet and ſecurity which peace brings along with it, deſerve our firſt notice, as what give the reliſh to all our enjoyments. Theſe indeed, by a ſingularly happy lot, we were in a great degree bleſt with at home, even in the midſt of the war itſelf. But the

time was, when our breaſts were filled with apprehenſions of ſeeing a very different ſtate of things; when even foreign forces were called in to defend us. And that this fair and fruitful Iſle might not, like the countries of our allies, have been at laſt in fact made a ſcene of rapine, devaſtation and bloodſhed, had the war continued; is what no one (I preſume) will venture to affirm. Human probabilities indeed were greatly in our favour. But "[a] the battle is not always to the ſtrong:" nor is ſucceſs an inſeparable attendant on courage. The events of war (how little ſo ever the politician of this world may think of it) are in the hands of GOD: and had we rejected reaſonable terms of peace, might not that have turned away the divine favour from us? For thenceforward the war would have ceaſed, on our part, to be either juſt or neceſſary.—Of ſurprizing turns and changes of ſucceſs in war, hiſtory would furniſh inſtances in abundance. Wars that might at one time have been terminated with honour and advantage, by being carried on farther, have ended in loſs and diſgrace. Nay, in the war juſt concluded, a certain great prince was, in the compaſs of a few months, raiſed from the ve-

[a] Eccl. 9. 11.

ry brink of ruin to a condition of preſcribing to his enemies the terms of peace.

From apprehenſions of this kind we are for the preſent entirely delivered. Secure now from hoſtile alarms, whatever advantages, perſonal or national, indulgent Heaven has beſtowed on us, we may enjoy them in quiet and ſafety: a circumſtance on which the value of any bleſſing greatly depends. For how excellent ſo ever any good may be in itſelf, yet to us it is of ſmall account, if the poſſeſſion of it be inſecure.

But farther; it is in peace that all the arts and profeſſions of civil life naturally flouriſh. The unfavourable influence which war has upon theſe, even when the ſcene of action lies at a diſtance, is ſufficiently obvious. For extraordinary burthens and diſcouragements are thereby neceſſarily occaſioned: the artificers are carried off into the field: ſufficient ſupplies of new ones are prevented: and the minds of men, in ſuch times of publick danger and tumult, are generally too anxiouſly engaged to ſtrike out any thing new and uſeful. Plans however of general and extenſive utility cannot then, without particular hazard

and difficulty, be carried into execution. But in the calmneſs and ſecurity of peace, every thing is quite different. The minds of men, relieved from hoſtile terrors and apprehenſions, and naturally buſy and active, will then be deviſing and planning: the means of executing are then comparatively eaſy: the proſpect of ſucceſs proportionably great; and particularly the hopes of ſecurely enjoying the acquiſitions they ſhall make, will give ſpirit and vigour to their undertakings. Hence induſtry and genius at ſuch a time are wont to be exerted to the utmoſt. The natural conſequence of which is univerſal plenty and publick proſperity.

Nor is the ſeaſon of peace leſs favourable to the cultivation of the liberal arts and ſciences, and of religion itſelf: of thoſe arts, which wither amidſt the tumults of arms: of that religion, to the temper and ſpirit of which thoſe fierce and brutal paſſions which war unchains, as it were, and lets looſe to deſtroy, are moſt oppoſite.

It muſt however be confeſſed that publick proſperity is not ſuch a neceſſary effect of peace, as conſtantly and certainly to follow upon

upon it. The war may have brought ſuch weakneſs and diſorder into the conſtitution, that till theſe are in ſome meaſure removed, the genuine, natural efficacy of peace to promote the well-being and happineſs of the community ſhall be but little perceived: as a body may be ſo exhauſted and diſeaſed by long and exceſſive labour, that reſt alone ſhall not be ſufficient to reſtore it. But if peace cannot itſelf remedy all the evils of war, it affords the opportunity of doing it. If they are to be remedied at all, it muſt be when peace is reeſtabliſhed. For the malady muſt neceſſarily ſpread and encreaſe, whilſt the cauſe that produced it, continues. And the immediate and moſt preſſing danger, the deſtruction threatened by an enraged foreign enemy, muſt be prevented; before internal evils, leſs alarming, becauſe not ſo immediately dangerous, can be ſufficiently attended to. It is therefore in peace only that wiſe and ſalutary regulations, for obviating and correcting the ill conſequences of war, can be formed, or however can be effectually carried into execution.

In this view the importance of the preſent peace is extremely great: and much, very much

much, depends on the ſchemes and plans of internal and domeſtic policy now to be purſued. Indeed, an entire removal of evils that have riſen to ſuch an height, is not perhaps, even by the moſt ſanguine, to be expected. Yet by a careful and ſkilful improvement of the fair opportunity, which providence has now granted, much (it is hoped) may be done towards leſſening and reducing them: the pernicious effects of them may be mitigated; and ſuch health and ſoundneſs, ſuch ſtrength and vigour, reſtored to the body politic, that induſtry, trade and commerce, under the kindly and foſtering influence of peace, and protected and encouraged by his majeſty's juſt and mild adminiſtration of government, may flouriſh; and plenty and proſperity, ſatisfaction and joy, in conſequence, reach to the utmoſt borders of the land.

But vain and ineffectual are the wiſeſt plans for promoting the proſperity of a people; if their manners are licentious and corrupt. For to the wicked, whether nations or individuals, there can be no laſting peace; no permanent tranquillity. Nay, to the wicked, peace itſelf, whilſt it continues, is a curſe; one of the worſt of curſes; by it's very calmneſs and ſecurity,

curity, haſtening and compleating their ruin and deſtruction. But this brings me to conſider,

Secondly, The means neceſſary on our part to render the preſent peace laſting, and truly a bleſſing.

If the influence of religion and virtue univerſally prevailed, and all mankind, "[a] denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts," under an awful ſenſe of a juſt judgment to come, "lived ſoberly, righteouſly and godly;" thoſe figurative predictions of "[b] beating "ſwords into plow-ſhares and ſpears into "pruning hooks" under the goſpel-diſpenſation, might then be literally fulfilled. For "nation would not then lift up ſword againſt "nation; neither would they learn war any "more." But ſuch perpetual peace is reſerved for another, and more happy ſtate: the weakneſs and corruption of human nature; the prejudices, paſſions and appetites, by which men in this life will ever be more or leſs ſwayed, forbid us to expect it here. Yet how much, and how frequently ſo ever, the world may in fact be diſturbed with quarrels and

a Tit. II. 12. b Iſai. II. 4.

conten-

contentions; ſtill it is certain that "[a] the "work of righteouſneſs," in proportion as it prevails, is, to ſocieties as well as particular perſons, "peace, and the effect of righteouſ-"neſs quietneſs and aſſurance." And this, whether by the ſpecial favour of God, or in the natural conſtitution of things, is the only baſis of any laſting publick tranquillity.

If "[b] when the hoſt was going forth againſt "our enemies," agreeably to the divine injunction, we were annually called upon by authority to "keep ourſelves from every evil "thing:" if publick humiliation, ſolemn confeſſion of ſins, and vows of better obedience for the future, were at thoſe times neceſſary to obtain from God an happy concluſion of the war; then, after peace is reſtored, in order to ſecure to ourſelves the laſting enjoyment of it's advantages, a careful obſervance of the divine laws muſt be equally neceſſary. For if wickedneſs and impiety might have then withheld this bleſſing from us, they might now occaſion the withdrawing of it. Not that we may look upon the reſtoration of publick tranquillity as granted to our national merit; nor hope by our future obedi-

a Iſai. XXXII. 17. b Deut. XXIII. 9.

ence

ence to obtain from God, in the way of claim or debt, the continuance of it. Far be all ſuch arrogance from us. In regard to the bleſſing juſt reſtored, with the moſt unfeigned humility we muſt ſay, "[a] not unto us, O "God, not unto us, but unto thy name, be "the glory; for thy mercy, and for thy "truth's ſake." And as to any future obedience which our utmoſt care can pay to the divine laws; happy will it ever be for us, not only as individuals, but in our national capacity alſo, that "[b] the compaſſions of God fail "not." But notwithſtanding this, as members of the community, we are ſtill obliged to endeavour after righteouſneſs: for though we cannot thereby hope to merit, yet we may obtain from the favour of God, the continuance of it's peace and proſperity; inaſmuch as we have ſufficient grounds for believing, that the moral characters of nations, mixed and imperfect as they are, in the preſent divine diſtributions of temporal good and evil, are not diſregarded.

In this view, to the firmneſs and duration of the preſent peace, a deep ſenſe of the divine goodneſs, and warm and affectionate re-

a Pſ. CXV. 1. b Lam. III. 22.

turns of praiſe and thankſgiving, ſeem particularly neceſſary. Not that our thanks, nor indeed any other of our ſervices, can at all profit the Almighty: for "[a] our goodneſs extendeth not to him." Yet grateful acknowledgments of his mercies, he nevertheleſs requires, and is graciouſly pleaſed to accept, at our hands. And ſurely a favour muſt appear to have been extremely miſplaced, where this eaſy, I may add, conſidering the make and frame of the human ſoul, this natural and pleaſant, return is neglected. — Sorry I am to obſerve that the reſtoration of publick tranquillity has not been received with that univerſal joy and thankfulneſs, which, conſidering the nature of the event in general, and the particular circumſtances of advantage attending it, might have been expected. From what cauſes this may have ariſen, it behoves thoſe to conſider ſeriouſly and impartially, who are *moſt* concerned. And were they *only* concerned, this obſervation would not have been made. But for the faults of individuals the community may ſuffer. For a languid and partial gratitude; and much more, diſcontent and murmuring, eſpecially if they became general, might provoke GOD to take

[a] Pſal. XVI. 2.

back

back what he had beſtowed; and ſo much the rather, as not having a juſt ſenſe of the value of his gift, we ſhould not be likely to make a due improvement of it.

But to proceed: To the ſettled and laſting tranquillity of a nation, piety and virtue, in the natural conſtitution of things alſo, as well as by the ſpecial favour of God, greatly contribute. In direct proof of this, it might be urged that religion prevents, as it certainly does on the part of the people influenced by it, the cauſes and occaſions of war. "[a] For "whence come wars and fightings among "men? Come they not hence, even of their "luſts?" And theſe religion curbs and reſtrains, and from a regard to an all-ſeeing judge, enforces the practice of good faith and fair dealing. But as an upright, inoffenſive conduct in a nation, though doubtleſs of great importance to the preſervation of it's peace, "([b] for who is he that will harm ye, if ye be "followers of that which is good?") is yet by no means, of itſelf, a ſufficient defence; nay, if joined with weakneſs and inability to repel an hoſtile attack, is but too likely to provoke one: it will therefore be more to

a Jam. IV. 1. b 1 Pet. III. 13.

the purpoſe to ſhew that the real ſtrength and internal union of a nation, and conſequently it's ſecurity and tranquillity, will, in the nature of things, be proportioned to the piety and virtue that prevail in it.

To render a nation really, and not in appearance only, flouriſhing and powerful, two things ſeem particularly neceſſary: "that the authority of thoſe who are appointed to govern, be maintained in it's due vigour;" and, "that the ſtrength of thoſe who conſtitute the body of the people, be preſerved." For the ſtrength of an undiſciplined, diſorderly multitude is loſt in confuſion; and the authority over an enervated, daſtardly people is little better than empty ſhew. But from theſe two in conjunction, from authority ſupported by ſtrength and this regulated and directed by authority, reſults real national power and ability.

How much the ſtrength of the individuals of a nation, their ability of mind as well as body, depends on the influence of piety and virtue, is viſible and notorious. For vicious indulgences evidently impair the rational faculties, and produce bodily weakneſs and diſeaſe

eaſe, which, not ending with the offenders themſelves, paſs to their unhappy deſcendants, and enfeeble ſucceeding generations. Whereas the natural conſequences of a virtuous and religious conduct are health and ſtrength; ſoundneſs of underſtanding and firmneſs of mind; prudence in counſel and ſteadineſs in action.

Nor has religion a leſs happy effect in giving vigour to authority and ſecuring the reverence due to it. For whilſt men "[a] fear "GOD," they will "honour the king." Whilſt a ſenſe of religion, which repreſents civil government under the venerable character of "[b] the ordinance of GOD," is deeply imprinted in their minds; they will be "[c] ſubject, "not only for wrath," which art or ſecreſy may elude, power or numbers defy, "but al-"ſo for conſcience ſake," which is a ſteady, uniform, never ceaſing principle of obedience. But were the bulk of mankind once ſet free from the obligations of religion, no other ties would ſignify much. The reaſons of things they could not eaſily be made to underſtand, nor, if they did, would they much regard them. Benevolence and publick ſpirit muſt,

a 1 Pet. II. 17. b Rom. XIII. 2. c —— XIII. 5.

on

on this ſuppoſition, give way to importunate ſelfiſh affections and craving appetites; or at beſt operate weakly and partially. And honour, unleſs directed by religion, we ſee, is a moſt capricious principle, and may be perverted into a moſt hurtful one. In ſuch a ſtate of things what would civil government have to rely on? Inward reverence and reſpect for it there could be little or none: and juſt ſo much outward obedience, as a regard to preſent intereſt, or the fear of the magiſtrate's power, ſhould induce men to pay. For put the caſe that they could tranſgreſs, not only with impunity, but alſo with advantage, (which, upon the preſent ſuppoſition, might very frequently happen) and what would there be left of force ſufficient to reſtrain them?

Thus neceſſary is religion to the maintenance of authority as well as ſtrength in a nation: it is not leſs ſo to the internal peace and union of it. A preſumption that men live under the ſenſe and awe of an all-ſeeing and juſt GOD, is the great foundation of mutual truſt and confidence; the bond and ſupport of civil ſociety. When this preſumption is well grounded, the individuals of a nation in general

general diſcharge their reſpective duties to each other and to the publick; authority is reſpected, and order and good government maintained; truth and juſtice, honeſty and integrity, fair dealing and ſolid credit, prevail; and the nation in ſuch circumſtances is at peace within itſelf, ſtrong, flouriſhing and happy. But whenever religion, generally, loſes it's influence in a nation, quite contrary and moſt pernicious effects neceſſarily enſue; in private life, fraud and falſhood, oppreſſion and violence, quarrels and contentions; with reſpect to the publick, a diſregard of it's intereſt; a ſacrificing of it to private and ſelfiſh views, in caſes of competition; parties and factions; in a word, "[a] confuſion and eve-"ry evil work." This is no imaginary repreſentation, but only what reaſon bids us expect, and fact tells us has ever followed, from a general defect of religious principles. The approaches towards which therefore, in a merely temporal view, are very alarming.

But religion is particularly neceſſary to the peace and tranquillity of free nations. For the fewer external reſtraints any people are under, the more need there is of internal

[a] Jam. III. 16.

ones.

ones. For reſtrained, one way or other, men muſt be; otherwiſe a general ſcene of diſorder and confuſion would ſoon appear. — Liberty, rightly underſtood and enjoyed under a ſenſe of religion, is a glorious privilege. But when the ties of religion become weak, it is ſure to be abuſed; and ſuch exceſſes committed under the pretence of it, as are a reproach to the very name of liberty, and unleſs timely put a ſtop to, muſt end in the loſs of it. For licentiouſneſs, anarchy and ſlavery follow in natural conſequence.

And if the good government and welfare of this nation ſo much depend on the influence of religion; with what concern and indignation muſt we reflect on the wicked induſtry employed, and that openly and avowedly, in diſcourſe and in writing, to leſſen and deſtroy that influence; to unhinge the principles and corrupt the morals of the people? The moſt ſacred ſubjects, and that holy book itſelf which "ſhews to us the way of "ſalvation," and contains the only effectual inforcements of virtue and good conduct, are with impious wit and profane drollery publickly expoſed to contempt. The effects of theſe execrable practices too viſibly appear in the diſ-

ſolute

ſolute and licentious behaviour of the multitude. For neither rank nor ſtation, neither office nor authority, is reſpected: all order and decency is trampled upon: and whilſt the characters of men are treated in the moſt inhuman and atrocious manner, their very perſons are hardly ſafe. Where ſuch licentiouſneſs may end, and what may be the conſequences of it, it highly concerns every one to conſider, that has any love for his country, or even for himſelf. For it may ſoon be his own turn to be the object of popular clamour and reſentment; which is ſcarce leſs capricious than popular favour. — May "the "LORD give us underſtanding" to "[a] know "the things which belong unto our peace!"

But to return; The neceſſity of religion to the internal peace and union of a nation, eſpecially of a free one, is ſufficiently evident. Nor is it leſs evident, how much national ſtrength and ſecurity depend on internal peace and union. It is a maxim in politics, of the higheſt authority, that "[b] a kingdom, divided "againſt itſelf, cannot ſtand." For let the foundations of the political fabric be ever ſo ſtrong and deeply laid, civil diſſentions will

a Luke XIX. 42. b Mar. III. 34.

ſap and undermine them, or forcibly tear them up. Nay, the greater the ſtrength of a nation, the more diſmal muſt be the conflicts, the more dreadful and deplorable the ruin that would enſue, ſhould that ſtrength be armed againſt itſelf. And though the truth of this be confeſſed on all hands; yet it is ſeldom ſufficiently conſidered that "[a] the be-"ginning of" publick as well as private "ſtrife is, as when one letteth out water:" the wiſeſt head cannot foreſee how far the flood may extend.—Differences of opinion indeed, and even jealouſies and ſuſpicions in a free nation appear to be unavoidable; and may be, in ſome degree, neceſſary for the preſervation of liberty. But the misfortune is; men not only ſometimes "fear where no "fear is;" but, be the fear real or imaginary, having once embarked, they ſeldom know where to ſtop; their paſſions are heated, and they run lengths which they never at firſt thought of: and ſome there always are in a nation, who hope to find their account in publick diſturbances. — Where faction and party ſpirit prevail, even though they proceed not to open outrages, yet the hands of government are thereby neceſſarily weakened;

[a] Prov. XVII. 14.

every

every expedient for the publick good loſes it's force and effect: and the beſt ſchemes that can be deviſed, for ſtrengthening the conſtitution and removing diſorders introduced into it, are, by artful miſrepreſentations and obſtructions purpoſely raiſed, rendered abortive. And thus what is weak, muſt be weak ſtill; what is diſordered, muſt continue ſo.

None, it may be hoped, are ſo wicked, as to wiſh to ſee their country again involved in the miſeries of war: and yet it is amazing to conſider, what induſtry, and what arts are employed, not only to diffuſe through the nation a ſpirit of diſſatisfaction and unthankfulneſs for the bleſſing of peace, but alſo to raiſe and foment diviſions amongſt ourſelves; than which nothing ſurely can be more likely to encourage a baffled enemy, and that might not otherwiſe ſoon think of trying his ſtrength with us again, to "make himſelf," in all haſte, "ready for battle:" — unleſs he ſhould play a ſurer game, ſhould look on and ſuffer us to weaken and conſume ourſelves; and then, at laſt, give the finiſhing blow to what we had almoſt done to his hand.

If civil diſcord *muſt* ſucceed to foreign war, then indeed we have had peace too ſoon. But I hope, the LORD will not, after the great things which he has done for us, thus abandon and give us up to deſtruction at the laſt.

To conclude; whether the advantages of the peace are adequate or not, whether they have been over rated or under rated; yet if we have virtue enough to improve them properly, and if the peace ſhould be laſting, this nation will have reaſon to bleſs thoſe who brought it about. That our virtue, or capacity of improving the advantages of peace, would by a continuance of the war have been encreaſed, we are not told. And that any peace which might have been obtained by carrying it on longer, even without any diſaſter, nay, with the ſame rapid courſe of ſucceſs, would certainly have been laſting, I think, no one will preſume to ſay. But I may venture to affirm that it is very much in our own power to make this ſo, by ſuitable returns of gratitude and obedience to GOD for it; by cultivating thoſe virtues and diſpoſitions, which are the natural preſervatives

tives of peace, and checking thoſe paſſions, which are as likely to rekindle war, as either the encroaching ſpirit, or the ambition, of our enemies.

May that great Being therefore, "[a] who ſtilleth the raging of the ſea, and the noiſe of his waves, and the madneſs of the people," diſpoſe our hearts to peace and unity amongſt ourſelves; to a dutiful reverence and affection to that beſt of princes, whom his providence has ſet over us; and to a quiet, conſcientious and faithful diſcharge of the duties of our ſeveral ſtations, offices and relations in life. Then ſhall perſonal integrity approve itſelf the natural and ſolid baſis of national tranquillity: then ſhall the Lord delight to "dwell among us" and bleſs us: then ſhall we be ſafe from our late enemies, and from all that may riſe up againſt us; and this our country, flouriſhing in peace, and enjoying plenty and proſperity under the benign influences of free government, and the ſalutary reſtraints of pure religion, "[b] ſhall be to GOD a "name of joy, a praiſe and an honour before "all the nations of the earth."

a Pſ. LXV. 7. b Jer. XXXIII. 9.

FINIS.

tives of peace, and checking those passions, which are as likely to rekindle war, as either the encroaching spirit, or the ambition, of our enemies.

May that great Being therefore, "who "stilleth the raging of the sea, and the noise "of his waves, and the madness of the people," dispose our hearts to peace and unity amongst ourselves; to a dutiful reverence and affection to that head of princes, whom his providence has set over us; and to a quiet, conscientious and faithful discharge of the duties of our several stations, [illegible] relations in life. Then shall personal integrity approve itself the natural and solid basis of national tranquillity: then shall the Lord delight to "dwell among us" and bless us: then shall we be safe from our late enemies, and from all that may rise up against us; and this our country, flourishing in peace, and enjoying plenty and prosperity under the benign influences of free government, and the salutary restraints of pure religion, "shall be to GOD a "name of joy, a praise and an honour before "all the nations of the earth."

a Ps. LXV. 7. b Jer. XXXIII. 9.

FINIS.